

Developing and Sustaining

Mindy Zapata: Well, I think at our program, Southwest Human Development Early Head Start and Head Start, we created a culture of using data by really embedding it into our strategic planning and our program goals and objectives, which included in – in all of our – be it grant plans, goals and objectives, our service area plan, policy and procedure – careful consideration for how we were going to embed the use of data in the services and the systems that we were providing to the children and families in our community. And by going about doing that in a very strategic way, we were really thoughtful that it wasn't going to happen overnight, that there was going to be a gradual implementation and rollout to create this culture to use data.

And we gave thoughtful consideration to how we would equip staff with the tools necessary to both at the front end collect in the interim – in the delivery of service, utilize and analyze that data, and then how would we go about embedding it into a continuous improvement process that would help our organization to evolve over time, to have a continual quest to use data in a more and more meaningful way. To – rather than, as I think historically in Early Head Start and Head Start, as we have with our PIR outcomes, often thought about shifting systems after children leave us to really make a – a culture shift in our organization that we would use data immediately in the service of children to improve the outcomes for the kids and families that we knew today rather than thinking about those kids that had left us tomorrow, and then seeking to improve systems. And so, that was really how the journey began to create a culture of data in our organization.

The one piece of advice that I would give to another organization is to really include specific timelines, very specific action steps, and to not shy away from those areas of the systems that are traditionally not given as much consideration, like fiscal operations, human resources, communication, self-assessment, ongoing monitoring, because those are really going to be the tenets that are going to hold up your move to including a culture of data in your organization.